

M/045/030

Repercussions being felt from mine collapse

YORK, N.Y. - Neighbors of a collapsed mine in Retsof said at a recent meeting that they have had trouble getting on with their lives since the salt mine, North America's largest, collapsed in March.

Since its collapse, up to 30 million gallons of water has rushed into the cavity per day, flooding at least 900 of its 6,000 acres. Massive sinkholes have developed a few miles south of the collapsed area.

"I don't think things will ever be the same," said Jackie Ylisto, who lives a few hundred yards from a sinkhole that is about 1,000 feet in diameter and 70 feet deep. She has fears her home will be swallowed by the earth.

Nancy Glazier is having trouble selling her home. "The bank feels the house is too much of a risk," she said, after a deal to sell her house was nixed even though Glazier provided the bank with an affidavit from Akzo that said her home is not above the mine.

These problems are just a few of many that will be facing residents of rural Livingston County for years to come, claims Jim Allen, a Buffalo lawyer who has been hired by several Cuylerville, N.Y. residents. Allen said he is contacted daily by people interested in reviewing possible litigation against Akzo.

Residents say they are frustrated by a lack of information about the collapse from both Akzo and local government officials.

"So many people have forgotten that we're the big victim," said Akzo vice president G. Richard Thompson, in response. "They see us as the villain, and we're the victim."

Akzo, which resumed production at the mine in April, plans to produce enough salt at Retsof for local customers and has purchased "hundreds of thousands of tons" from foreign salt producers to serve other customers throughout the Northeast, said Akzo spokeswoman Catherine Bolton.

Meanwhile the company said it has doubts it will ever be able to plug the leak in the mine. Akzo has spent at least \$10 million to date trying to save the mine.

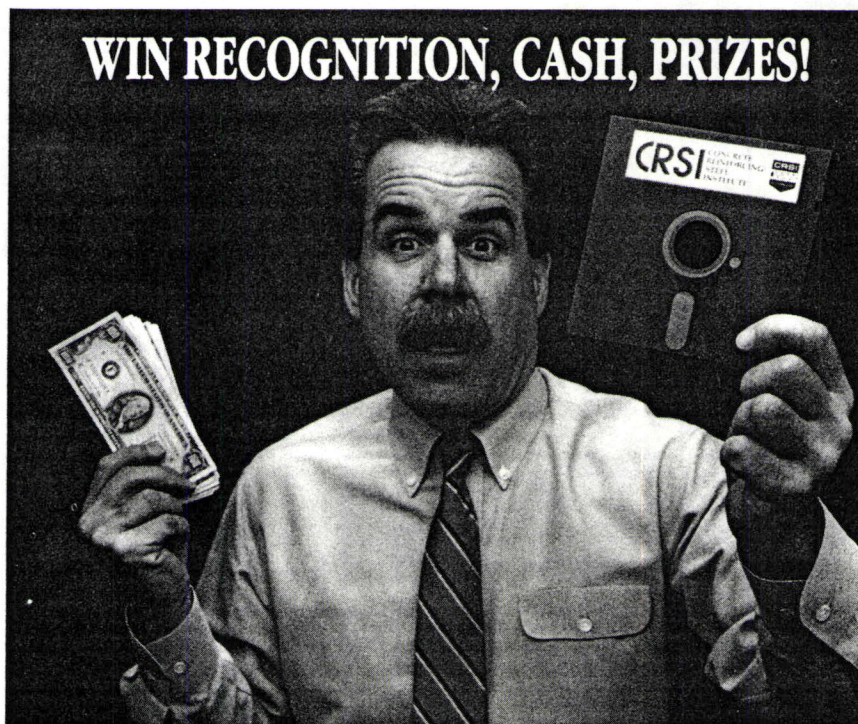
Complaints of cracking or other damage in homes, well-water losses, and further sinkholes in the area have been linked to the mine collapse.

Some have been settled, Thompson said, but he declined to elaborate.

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